

# The Fleeting Ice

by mochall

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Summary: ONE-SHOT: Leaving the summer festival of Kyoto early, Yukimura Chizuru decides to visit the bedridden and lonely Okita Souji in hopes of cheering him up. Bringing watermelon slices with her as a snack, what could possibly go wrong with this simple encounter? Rated T for language, suggestive themes, you get the gist :) Genres: Humor, Angst, Hurt/Comfort, and slight Romance.

## The Fleeting Ice

\*\*I posted this ONE-SHOT earlier on tumblr for a friend, so nothing should be different. This is written in Chizuru's perspective. As always, enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"I hope he's still awakeâ€|"<p>

The walk back to headquarters wasn't long since we didn't go far to celebrate the summer's festivities. Everyone was having a good time; even Hijikata-san was in high spirits, which was a nice change from his usual strict demeanor.

â€|Wellâ€|everyone except for me. I had joined the rest of the captains because they insisted I should join them, and I didn't want to disappoint them either. Not to mention that some of the captains were eager to see me dressed up as a girl again, which was relieving to finally be able to dress the way I should, but at the same time I felt so embarrassed because the captains paid more attention to my garments than usual. However, it wasn't my unusual spotlight of attention that urged me to leave the festivities early.

I couldn't really enjoy myself entirely because I knew that someone couldn't join in on the fun. Okita-san's condition had gotten slightly worse today, and despite his sardonic smile telling everyone

that he was fine, Hijikata-san knew better than to let him partake in this year's festival. I couldn't disagree with the commander's orders because he was right. Rest was something that Okita-san needed if he was going to get better "even if he didn't like it. But I still felt sad he couldn't have fun too. Festivals like these don't happen all the time, especially now that Kyoto's more dangerous than ever before.

But the night wasn't over yet, and if he wasn't asleep yet, Okita-san could at least have a small summer snack. I had gotten a few watermelon slices and walked with them to his room. I had a small fear that if he were sleeping, he'd get irritated at me for disturbing him. But to my surprise, I found him sitting on the veranda wide-awake.

He sat cross-legged, only wearing his sleeping yukata. It looked as though he woke up from a nap, but I knew him better than that. I knew that he despised being bedridden, and I could hardly blame him for feeling that way. In the first six months that I had been with the Shinsengumi, I understood the frustration of being confined alone in a room. While everyone was out celebrating, I'm sure it saddened him that he couldn't be with his comrades. Maybe that was why he refused to go to bed.

"Chizuru-chan? Are you just gonna stand there while gaping at me all night?", his own voice startled me slightly, bringing me back to reality. My eyes quickly found his, which were keenly trained on me. My mouth was slightly dropped "but gaping? I'd been so lost in thought that I hadn't realized he had already acknowledged my presence. Perhaps I did look foolish while I was just "staring" at him.

A warm color flooded my cheeks while I tried to break away from his emerald gaze as if I hadn't done anything flustering "but I was clearing failing at feigning nonchalance.

"N-No " I was "I was just wondering if you were hungry", I tried to redirect the center of attention to the watermelon. Of course, he saw through my scheme and grinned laconically, but luckily he didn't embarrass me further. I stepped closer to him to hopefully spark his appetite once he saw the fruit I brought. He eyed the watermelon in my hand, most likely debating whether or not he was actually in the mood to eat.

"Watermelon, huh? That's a refreshing snack, especially now with the blazing heat "but I don't have much of an appetite today", his rueful smile was sincere, and even a little apologetic. I understood what he meant, but I couldn't help myself from being slightly disappointment that my plan to cheer him up wasn't working so far.

"Oh " But still, you should at least eat a little", I switched tactics while sincerely showing my concern for his health. But my second chance was turned down wordlessly. Instead, Okita-san's smile faded and he quirked an unimpressed brow at me. In response, I bowed my head slightly while doing my best to not let out a surrendered sigh.

"Okay " Well, I'll leave you alone now " ", I was beginning to turn the other way but-

"Where do you think you're going? Just get over here already", Okita-san now looked slightly annoyed, but he patted the spot next to him, urging me to sit there. I blinked, not sure what he wanted from me if he wasn't hungry. Nonetheless, I obliged to him because I didn't want to challenge the sheer force of his personality.

After settling in my spot, I gave him a look. At that, he sighed exasperatedly.

"Well I can't let that food go to waste."

"Oh! Okay", I relaxed a little and reached for my own slice. I hadn't eaten a whole lot either, so I seized this opportunity to fill my stomach.

Okita-san and I remained silent. I wasn't sure what to talk about. If I brought up what the other men were doing at the festival, I'd probably be putting the brunette next to me in a bad mood. I didn't want to force a conversation either because that could potentially lead to him teasing me, not to mention the extreme level of awkwardness that would be added. So I resigned myself to eating a small bite of the watery pink fruit in my hand. The taste had quenched my mouth magnificently and even my stomach felt better after finally having food inside of it.

"Mm! These taste really great! Please, help yourself to one- \_Huh?!\_" I was going to politely offer Okita-san a slice of his own so that I wasn't the only one eating, but his large hand grasped for my wrist. It wasn't painful, but I couldn't wriggle my wrist free from his strong hold. I could only latch onto the watermelon in my hand so that I wouldn't drop it and make a mess.

"O-Okita-san?", I didn't know where our situation was going. But as if he had read my mind, he answered by moving my hand closer to him—but at the same time his face was nearing mine!

"Wh-What are you doing?!", I squeaked with panic. I was further dragged out of my comfort zone when my own cheeks betrayed me by blushing madly. What made it worse was that the moon was full and bright tonight, which wasn't doing me the favor of hiding my scarlet face. But my disquiet did nothing to faze Okita-san, he was casually making the distance between us shorter and shorter.

If his goal was to fluster me, he was certainly achieving it.

"I just want a bite. That's all", he carried on carelessly.

"O-Okay, but don't you want your own slice for that?", I said any excuse that came to mind.

"I told you I don't have much of an appetite today. No way I can eat this all by myself. Now stop being selfish."

"But-!", the rest of my rebuttal died when Okita-san's mouth chewed off a piece of my watermelon. I thought my cheeks couldn't burn any hotter—I thought wrong.

But even as he chewed, I couldn't stop myself from looking intently at his face —plus it was hard to look at anything else other than

him at this close of a distance. The moonlight shining down on his slender face made him look paler than usual, and his eyes glistened like jewels. If he were sitting perfectly still, I'm sure he would've looked like a statue carved from ice.

Then his eyes met mine, and his lips pulled back into that small, triumphant, and mischievous half-smile of his. He had been gauging my reaction and was obviously taking amusement from it. Yet after he finished eating, he didn't pull back. His fingers were still coiled to my wrist.

I couldn't bear to look into his eyes anymore, especially since I was gaping at him again. My eyes trailed to the side while I forcefully closed my mouth, and because I was so close to Okita-san, I could hear a breathless chuckle escape his lips.

My chest was tightening, bracing for his verbal gloating as if I were about to run into a tree.

"Now was that so hard? Good girls should know how to be polite and share."

And there it was. Though I was expecting it, that didn't mean I was prepared for it.

"O-Okay", I was still purposefully training my eye on anything but him. I thought "pointlessly- that if I kept averting his gaze he'd eventually quit teasing me."

I thought wrong again.

"There, I'm full. Happy now?", Okita-san's mocking grin wasn't anywhere near to vanishing. I did want him to eat. I just wasn't expecting him to do so with such a short gap between our faces.

"More or less", I murmured, still maintaining my mighty effort to avoid meeting his eyes, though it was difficult because I could almost physically feel the power of their burning gaze on me.

Apparently satisfied with my answer, he finally let go of me and put more space. I had to mentally force myself from letting out a relieved sigh. Still, I was rattled enough to the point where I couldn't finish eating the rest of the watermelon.

"So. Are you going to tell me why you're home early? Weren't you supposed to be at the festival with all the guys?", his voice was as light-hearted as usual, but his demanding eyes locked onto mine almost permanently. I wasn't expecting him to change the topic so easily, but neither was I prepared for the next one.

"I am."

I knew my reasons for being here and not at the festival, but I could hardly recount them out loud to Okita-san.

"Is it bad that I'm here?", I ducked my head, but I finally peered up at him like a child guilty of something. Then he rolled his eyes at me.

"I didn't say it was bad", his tone was -ironically- almost scolding. No, it sounded more like he was getting defensive about a subject I couldn't understand.

"I just don't get why you'd rather spend your time here and not at the festival."

"I like being here too and I was starting to get a little tired", that was all I could come up with.

"Aren't you missing out on all the fun?", Okita-san smiled bitterly at me.

"I don't think so. Besides, I've already been to plenty of festivals before, and there will always be a few next year", I said.

"Yeah I guess you're right. There'll be more festivals you can go to in the years to come", something in his tone made me feel fragile, as if I were made up of glass that was suddenly being shattered into tiny shards.

His eyes traveled to the sky, but they weren't gazing up at the moon and stars admiringly. They seemed distant, as if there was something fleeting before his eyes.

He looked more frozen than before, and as I gazed at him, I was selfishly wishing he were a statue. I just wanted him to remain still so that he could always be here. But ice eventually melts away, and the water that's formed from it vanishes into nothing.

My heart began to work harder, and my head felt light enough to the point that I started to think that it might just float away in the air. I could feel the beginnings of tears pushing the corners of my eyes, but I blinked them back and swallowed heavily.

"Maybe next year you could come with me", I suggested with a small smile. It was a weak, pitiful effort, but it was all I could do to try to restrain him. I didn't want him to vanish. Maybe it was a selfish desire, but I didn't want to see him go away like snow in the warm spring. However, there will always be an endless cycle of winters and springs. His illness thought otherwise.

"Really? What kind of girl would want to spend time with a Wolf from Mibu?", he let out a short snort, finally meeting my eyes again. It was true that a lot of people found the "Wolves of Mibu" frightening; however, most people didn't live with them for a long time like me. I knew that they could indeed be frightening in the battlefield, taking lives without a second thought. But I also knew that they fight for noble goals and dreams that not even kings would dare to strive for.

"I don't see anything wrong with that", I said softly, not wanting to explain my full list of reasons for wanting him to go with me. After hearing myself speak, I realized that I sounded extremely childish, and Okita-san's grin was all the more proof of it.

"Um, I mean- you don't have to go out with me if you're not interested-", that came out wrong.

"Go out to next year's festival, I mean! That's what I'm trying to say. Ah ha ha", and now I was more nervous than before.

"You're stuttering an awful lot, huh?", Okita-san's curiosity seemed to have had derived more from amusement rather than genuine wonder.

"N-No I'm not!"

In response, Okita-san could no longer maintain his cool composure. It got past the threshold to where he had to cover his laughs with his hand. All I could do was look away from him and feel myself tense while frowning, but I'm sure I still looked like a pouting child-something in which I was trying my hardest not to portray.

Not wanting to continue being his laughing stock, I started to prepare myself to leave, but that's when I felt something cold and smooth against my cheek.

My eyes darted to the side, and I found Okita-san's long slender fingers leaving ghostly touches to my face. Whatever thought or idea that was residing within my head was immediately extinguished. My breathing hitched, and I could hardly muster a sound. Warmth started to spread across my cheeks, and perhaps Okita-san's cold fingertips could easily feel it too. Even so, it was impossible to look away from his gentle eyes that were staring right into mine. It almost seemed like he was looking at something more than just my brown eyes. Without understanding it entirely, I felt my heart thundering deep in my breast as if it were about to burst—and strangely I didn't feel threatened by it.

Before I could even start to respond, the corners of Okita-san's lips pointed upwards to turn into an impish smile. I felt a small wave of panic wash through me before I felt his fingers curl gently into my flesh, pinching it jokingly, but still enough to make me flinch.

"Ow ow ow!", his grasp wasn't enough to hurt me, but the words fell out of my mouth automatically.

"You really are cheeky", he wiggled my skin to emphasize his pun.

"Ow! Stop, it's not funny!", I whined. My hands tried to pry his fingers off of my cheek, but even before I could succeed, Okita-san had finally let go of me. Gently, I massaged my cheek as if I could ebb away the slight pain.

"What was that for?", I asked, but it came out more as a grouse.

"Are you complaining? To me that was a simple warning! Unless you'd want me to switch gears?", a dangerous glint flashed across his eyes as he spoke. I knew from past experience that his malevolent demeanor could potentially lead to his usual threatening of killing me. And although most of his threats were empty, I couldn't help but wonder when I'd see the day when he would actually make good on that promise.

"N-No, that's not necessaryâ€¦", I tried to dissuade him.

"Do you want to know what is necessary?", he didn't wait for my answer.

"It's necessary that you get your ass to bed. Good girls shouldn't stay up past their bedtime with boys", he smiled generously, perhaps showing a tiny fragment of concern for me.

"I'm not a kid anymore. I don't need a bedtime", just as said that, I finally realized that my eyelids were heavy.

"â€¦Although I am tired nowâ€¦", I mumbled, but I couldn't prevent myself from yawning. My hand tried to suppress it, but I still felt the small beginnings of exhausted tears attempting to leak out from my eyes. Okita-san laughed a little after watching me basically prove his earlier statement right.

"You're a funny girl", his warm and fervent eyes matched his pleasant grin. I fell silent, not sure whether or not to take his comment as compliment. Instead, I finally stood up and gathered the partially uneaten food.

"Wellâ€¦I'll be going now because the both of us need rest", I raised my brow at him knowingly.

"So you're not cutting me any slackâ€¦", now he was the one sounding like a child. I was expecting more of a protest from him, but he stretched lazily while letting out a short groan before getting up. I forced myself from displaying it on my face, but I was proud that he was being compliant with me.

"All right, you win this time, but only because there's nothing else to do right now", he said confidently as if I had never shaken his pride. But before sitting with him, I saw with my own eyes that he was doing nothing at all except taking in the scenery. Maybe he was deciding to listen to me because I technically broke him free from the tendrils of nothingness and loneliness by keeping him company, and now he's satisfied enough to go to bed. As I thought that, I realized how over-my-head I was. Still, the thought did give me joy.

"Goodnight Chizuru-chan", Okita-san, at last not looking so cold and frozen, flashed me a sincere smile before turning the other way toward his room.

"Goodnightâ€¦", I said while watching his back for a good amount of time. Right when he was about to turn the corner, I reluctantly did the same.

At least I made him smileâ€¦ So tonight was sort of fulfilling.

"Chizuru-chan", Okita-san's voice made me stop, and I turned around eagerly -almost too quickly as well.

"Yes?"

"â€¦Thank you for the watermelon."

The frigid statue of the man I saw earlier was no more when I saw Okita-san again. Something about his molten green eyes and radiant smile made him vibrant. My chest tightened again, but for a different reason this time. As simple as his gratitude was, it made feel as though my feet were about to leave the ground.

"You're welcome", I smiled in return, hoping that I could express the same kind of warmth that he did.

"Goodnight Okita-san. Sleep well", those were my last words to him, wishing that he could always rest easily no matter what he went through that he could always keep that smile

\_Sleep well\_

End  
file.